

EPISODE 230**[INTRODUCTION]**

[00:00:03] PF: Welcome to episode 230 of Live Happy Now. I'm your host, Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us.

Bullying has become such an issue in today's world that October has even been named National Bullying Prevention Month. While we normally associate bullying with school children, the fact that is many adults are being bullied at work every day.

Today's guest, Dr. Britt Andreatta is an internationally recognized thought leader who creates brain science-based solutions for today's challenges. As author of the book, *Wired to Connect*, which is about the brain science of team's collaboration and inclusion, she's developed workplace safety tips to make sure all employees are working together to eliminate bullying in the work place. Let's hear what she has to say about it.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:47] PF: Britt, thank you so much for joining us on the show this week. This is such an interesting topic, and it's an unusual path for us to take.

[00:00:54] BA: Well, I'm so happy to be joining you this morning, Paula, and reaching out to your followers and listeners. We're also impacted by stuff at work. I think it's really important to talk about these things, because I think [inaudible 00:01:05] happiness.

[00:01:06] PF: Yeah, and workplace bullying. This is National Bullying Prevention Month, and normally when we think about bullying, we think about kids. We think about school. But workplace bullying you're saying is really a problem. Can you address, first of all, how common is it?

[00:01:23] BA: Well, some research by Dr. Judy Blando says that 75% of workers have been affected by workplace bullying.

[00:01:30] PF: Wow! That's rather a large number.

[00:01:34] BA: Yeah, either is the target. Okay? So that's about 27%, or the rest have either witnessed it or have been affected by it going down on their workplace. It's quite prevalent.

[00:01:46] PF: What exactly is it? What constitutes workplace bullying?

[00:01:49] BA: Well, just like you mentioned. We all think of that school yard bully. Well, school yard bullies grow up and go to work, and they often times bring those same tactics with them. So what workplace bullying is, is it's repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons. There's a perpetrator and a target, and it's really abuse of conduct that happens. It's intimidating. It's humiliating. It's threatening. It usually has some work sabotage involved in it, like they're trying to harm the ability of one person to perform. Usually has verbal abuse in it, and you kind of know it's happening because it's not just a one-time interaction. It's regular repetition. It's going on for a longtime. It escalates with increasing aggression, and there really is intent to harm. Someone's trying to take somebody else down through this very mean process.

[00:02:41] PF: How does it normally gets started?

[00:02:43] BA: Well, it's interesting. Most of the victims are actually the top performer. So usually someone is threatened by someone else's performance and then starts – It can start with little things like just leaving a nasty post-it note at the office and get increasingly aggressive, sabotaging people's work files, starting rumors about them, intentionally excluding them. It can take a lot of different forms. What really shocked me in the data is it's four times more common than either sexual harassment or racial discrimination in the workplace.

[00:03:16] PF: Really? Because this isn't something we talk a whole lot about.

[00:03:19] BA: No. I know. That's kind of why I wanted to bring some awareness to it. This is actually part of some research I did on my book about teams. So I study kind of the brain science of success and I wrote a recent book on kind of how do we bring out the best in teams at work?

As I was doing that research, I came across the really compelling research about how important psychological safety is. Then within that, how prevalent workplace bullying is. So I really wanted to bring attention to it, because it's going on all around us that people may be being silent or maybe not taken as seriously as, for example, sexual harassment or racial discrimination. Now, I'm not saying that those are being taken seriously enough, but I think that there's more training on those things. There're more conversations about those two issues. So I think we really need to raise the awareness of workplace bullying, because it's happening to a lot of people.

[00:04:12] PF: So we know that from what you've just said, the top performers are likely to get bullied. Who are the people that are bullying them?

[00:04:21] BA: Well, there are going to be folks who are threatened in some way. There are folks who have used aggression in the past. Like I said, there's a connection between if they – Being a bully in their younger years to kind of get their way or to assert power. They bring those same tactics into the workplace.

There's not a pattern that I'm aware of around other things other than there's a history of using aggression as a form of power. You also see some correlation with people who are diagnosed as narcissistic, because narcissists, while they use charm on the front side, if people start to call them out or they're starting to lose their power, then they move into pretty aggressive bullying to get people back in alignment with their vision or their view. There is some correlation there.

[00:05:07] PF: Is it effective in terms do they get the end result they want? Because it seems to me, just thinking about the offices that I've worked in, if that were going on, I feel like the people around them wouldn't let that continue. But it sounds like it does.

[00:05:24] BR: It depends. Usually when it is allowed to continue, it's because the person who's doing the bullying has some level of power. So then people are uncomfortable confronting them, or reporting them, or they think the top performer can kind of handle it on their own. But overtime, it's absolutely impacting everyone.

In fact, I don't know if you've heard of the research by Drs. Christine Porath and Christine Pearson, two Christines. They wrote a book called *The Cost of Bad Behavior*, and they looked at what happens when even just between coworkers, if something is rude or uncivil and kind of

acts in the not nice way to their coworkers, it absolutely brings down the productivity of the coworkers, because people lose work time worrying about what happened. 80% of people lose work time due to worrying. Another 78% say their commitment to the organization decreases. They're not as excited to come to work. 66% feel their performance declines as a result, because they're also spending time avoiding the offender. Then 48%, nearly half, intentionally decreased their work efforts as a result to kind of pull back in.

So we know that people – When people are not nice to each other, it impacts how people feel like they can come to work and bring their best selves to work. Ultimately, 12% leave the organization, and that's just kind of rude or uncivil behavior. So take bullying and you can even have more impact. You're going to have people feeling sick, developing anxiety and depression as a result of being treated this way, having outright fear coming to work. It can be a problem.

[00:07:05] PF: Is there also a sense that like, say, my coworker is getting bullied and I'm sympathetic, empathetic. I want to help them, but I'm also afraid if I do since this person is in a position of power, then it's going to get turned on me.

[00:07:20] BR: Yeah. I mean, we've all known that kind of bystander effect can happen, where people are worried they might become a target too and so may not say something. I think this is where workplaces can do a better job. We know we have the annual sexual harassment training and we know we talk about racial discrimination, but I think as part of those conversations or as an additional training, workplaces need to be doing a better job about talking about what workplace bullying is and how to stop and prevent it. How to push back against it if it's happening to you. Just by giving people we know that awareness and some new tools, I think we can go a long way toward reducing this problem in our workplaces.

[00:08:01] PF: You mentioned before, you talked about psychological safety. Can you talk about what that means and how we need to implement it?

[00:08:08] BR: Yeah. So psychological safety was first discovered by Dr. Amy Edmondson. She's a professor at Harvard Business School, and she was researching teams and trying to identify what separates a great team from the mediocre or poor ones? Again and again in her research it came down to this concept of psychological safety.

What psychological safety is just this notion that you feel safe enough on the team that you can offer critiques, ideas, suggestions, even admit to making a mistake without fearing that you're going to be punished in some way, whether that's sidelined, or demoted, or just not be given the same opportunities.

What she found was teams are people felt safe enough to make mistakes or offer criticisms that those teams significantly outperformed other teams, because that then creates an environment with there's shared learning. People can come and say, "Wow! I screwed up," and everyone can learn from that, or you can challenge your boss and say, "Gosh! I don't think that's the best plan here." So then the team is able to like look at different ideas and to learn from everyone's perspective, right? Not just the leader's perspective.

So psychological safety, not only did she find it was a key differentiator, but then when Google did its huge global study, it was called Project Aristotle, they studied teams all around the globe and they found again the one key differentiator was psychological safety. So much so that they've now build psychological safety as like the key component that they teach their managers how to create and they teach their employees how to co-create, because they know it plays such a big role in teams doing their best.

[00:09:51] PF: Now, you know the benefit of it and you're sharing that with others, but if you have someone who's actually doing the bullying, they're not very interested in creating psychological safety. So in that environment, what do others do?

[00:10:07] BR: Well, so it's a couple things. I mean, I think a lot of us – I believe that humans are kinds and that are inherent natures, that we want to treat each other well. So when we see bad behavior, when we see someone not doing that, it's really around empowering the rest of us to speak up and to assert the kind of environment that we want to have.

When we do that, it has huge positive impacts in the workplace. I think it's really around empowering all of us to be more assertive at work, to just say, "Hey, I deserve a workplace that feels good to come to, and I'm going to also look out for my coworkers. If I see my friend being not treated well, I'm going to check in with them. I'm going to talk to HR. I'm going to speak up during a meeting." I think if we all did that a little bit more, we would all have a much better place to work and a much better society too.

[00:10:59] PF: That's fantastic if we're on the outside and we can pitch in and help someone. What if we're the person being bullied?

[00:11:06] BR: If you're the person being bullied, I think it's really – Well, first off, you're hearing some of this data. You're not crazy. It is happening to you and it's terrible and it's prevalent. So you're not alone. It's really about finding who you feel safe with. If you don't feel safe going to your manager or HR yet, talk to a couple of coworkers either inside your company or outside your company who you feel safe with. Get some support. The first thing to do is take care of yourself and get some support and have people around you who love you and care about you.

Then if have those conversations, you can start to think through what you want to do about it. It's not going to change if you don't speak up. The thing is once that behavior is in place, it keeps going. So then you've got to look at what are you willing to do if you go to HR. How can they support you? Usually, bullying also falls within harassment and creating a toxic work environment. So there're already policies on the books that exists that should protect you, but you also have to do your own assessment as to whether that feels okay. I've been in organizations where I absolutely know it's not okay to come forward, right? So then you may be looking at should you stay or is the best thing for you to do to go find a better, healthier workplace? But just hoping it will go away, it's not going to go away. It's going to keep going.

From an organizational perspective, if there's any CEOs or HR leaders listening to this podcast, take this really seriously. It's your leadership that creates an environment and you saying we have a zero tolerance around this and you really standing up for creating a work environment where people feel comfortable and safe. That's the only way you're going to get folks doing their best work and showing up in the way that you want them to and really contributing their strengths and their gifts to your organization.

[00:12:59] PF: You talk about there's a real cost associated with that, because it's just not that, "Hey, everybody's happy and we're having a great time at work." There is an actual cost that's associated with workplace bullying.

[00:13:12] BR: For sure. Some of those things that I mentioned before around people spending time worrying and losing productivity and even not working as hard or leaving the organization, that's one set of cost. The other set cost comes in what's called disengagement.

Go Gallup is a huge global researcher and they've done a lot of research on employee engagement, and they've identified kind of you got your super engaged employees. You've got your not engaged employees. Then you have your actively disengaged employees.

[00:13:39] PF: I thought that was the most interesting term, the actively disengaged.

[00:13:46] BR: Yeah.

[00:13:45] PF: You're like seriously disengaged.

[00:13:48] BR: Yeah. Here's their definition. Actively disengaged employees aren't just unhappy at work. They're busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish. So they're bitter and they're showing up bitter and bringing that negativity with them. Because of mirror neurons and because of some other things about our biology and psychology, when one person starts to behave that way, it can bring others down with them. Now, Gallup estimates that a disengaged employee costs 34% of their annual salary plus benefits.

[00:14:25] PF: Wow!

[00:14:26] BR: So 34% of their salary no per year is what the company is losing. I've actually done some math. If you have 500 employees and then we know that roughly 16% of workers in the U.S. are actively disengaged, and then you take a median salary. You can kind of do the math, and it's always a shocking number. For 500 employees, it can be easily over \$2 million is being lost due to their act of disengagement.

So one of the things that is a cost of workplace bullying is that the victim is likely to become more disengaged as are their coworkers who are witnessing this, because people just don't feel good about coming to a workplace that's toxic and where people are not treated well. Inevitably, there're multiple places that there's potential cost for the organization. The least of which is a

potential lawsuit too, right? If it's shown later that there was a long-standing pattern of this behavior that the organization didn't do anything about, then there's of course the cost of a very expensive lawsuit in addition to all these other kind of ongoing daily, but somewhat invisible costs that can happen.

[00:15:37] PF: In your experience, when people do bring it forward, is it taken seriously or is it downplayed? Because like you said, we're getting more and more about like sexual harassment. We're aware of this. We're getting training on it. Being racially sensitive, but maybe not so much with workplace. However, once they're made aware, what do you see happening?

[00:15:57] BR: It just depends on the organization and it depends – I mean, bottom line, and I've always hated this about kind of how HR sees things, right? But, generally, human resource folks, it's their job to do risk mitigation. Inevitably, for any of these kinds of situations, HR are sometimes looking at what's the risk mitigation here for either a lawsuit, or if the bully or the harasser is a top performer, this is where things can kind of be allowed to go on. It's when the perpetrator has some level of power or if they're bringing a perceived benefit to the organization. Sometimes the organization will not take the action they should, because it's easier to get the victims to move on.

I think that's what the whole me too and times up initiatives have been, is we have a long history of kind of seeing that play out. But I feel like we're starting to see some shifts in that. We're starting to see some – Even though the movements themselves are an indication that people are tired of this being in place. So I think we're seeing some shifts toward really starting to care about these issues more, and I think that's also true with workplace bullying.

HR and executive leaders who care about creating an environment where they want their folks to show up and be their best selves and do their best work are caring about engagement, and bullying, and harassment in all these issues and really working hard to create a positive environment. The question I have for your listeners is do you work at one of those places, or do you work at one kind of the old school places where those things are not really get taken seriously or there's a perception like, "Oh! We'll just get a new employee in here." If you work at one of those, then you're probably not going to get the support you deserve and I would encourage you to find a better workplace. Trust me. So many workplaces really, really care about bringing out the best in their people.

[00:17:55] PF: Yeah, and it is hard when you've been through that, I imagine, because you've got this battered employee syndrome and now you've got to find the strength to go on, go to a new place and take your chances there.

[00:18:10] BR: For sure, and I think that's why this is why I love so much of the work that Live Happy does. We also all have our own journeys and what we do to take care of ourselves, right? Mindfulness is one of those ways we can take care of ourselves. Having a good collection of trusted people and friends around us that's part of our social network.

There're things that we can do to take care of ourselves and counterbalance the effects of being treated poorly by one person, but we also have to take initiative there. We have to do some self-care. We have to reach out for support. Sign up for therapy. All of those things we can do to help ourselves heal and move forward and become fully – Get ourselves in good shape again and get ourselves through those damaging effects.

[00:18:59] PF: Yeah, those are really good tips to follow, and I know that you give a lot of tips in your book, and we're going to come back here in a couple seconds and tell people how they can learn more about your book. I believe we have a free chapter that they can download to learn more. But as we're wrapping things up today, what would be – You've just given us some great tips. What would be three things that you would encourage people to do if they're in this situation or if they're in a work environment where they know this is going on?

[00:19:24] BR: Well, I would point people to the Workplace Bullying Institute. You can find it online, and they have own wonderful set of resources both if you're the victim. Things you can do. Ways you can get this situation moving. As well as if you're in a leadership position and you care about changing this in your organization, they have a lot of training and tools available. So the Workplace Bullying Institute, I would encourage people to check out.

I would also just encourage people to realize that we all deserve a workplace that makes us feel good. We all deserve that, and that is not pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking. I think it's a basic human need. We spend a good chunk of our time at work and we deserve a place that makes us feel respected and valued. I think part of that it is to not settle. I would encourage people to not settle. If you're working in a place that doesn't make you feel that way, then start exploring.

LinkedIn is now a wonderful resource for you can start exploring other places to work. Networking with folks that you know and sometimes just being willing to leave that comfort zone even though it's not very comfortable. Sometimes we get in the habit of, "Oh, this is just where I work and it's just easier to stay here." You know what? You deserve something better so. So support yourself in that.

I think the third tip I would say is for all of us to keep our eyes and ears out and to be kind, to be kind to each other. So if you see somebody being mistreated or you see someone who looks a little smooched, maybe you don't even know what happened, go up and say, "Hey, are you okay today? You don't seem good. Are you okay? Can I do anything to support you?"

Certainly if you see something actively happening, sometimes the person who's the victim, we expect them to stand up for themselves. But bottom line, sometimes they're so shocked, or traumatized, or triggered that they are silenced. They can't say anything. So I think it's really acceptable and, in fact, encourage for the rest of us to say, "Hey, that wasn't okay what you just did, or are you aware that you just really cut that person off, or you just insulted that person? That's not okay with me." I think we all need to be willing to speak out for each other, and that's how we build a better workplace and a better world.

[00:21:40] PF: I love that. We'd all want someone to do that for us, so let' do it for that other person.

[00:21:46] BR: For sure.

[00:21:48] PF: Britt, this is such an interesting topic. There's so much to it. I suspect we're going to see a lot more about this topic, about workplace bullying in the future. I'm glad to see you're ahead of the curve in getting out in front of it and given us some great ways to manage it. As I said, we're going to come back and tell them how they can learn even more about it. But I want to thank you for coming on the show today.

[00:22:08] BR: Paula, it's been my honor. Thank you so much for having me on and I'm really excited to connect with your listeners.

[00:22:14] PF: Fantastic.

[OUTRO]

[00:22:19] PF: That was Dr. Brit Andreatta talking to us about workplace bullying. If you'd like to learn more about Britt and her book, *Wired to Connect*, and where to find her online, please visit us at livehappynow.com and we'll give you links and more information.

We hope you're already a subscriber to Live Happy Now, but if you're not, you can find us on the Pandora Podcast Network, Spotify, SoundCloud, Stitcher, iTunes and Google Play. Just look for us in your favorite platform and hit subscribe so you'll never miss an episode.

That is all we have time for this week. We'll meet you back here again next week for an all new episode. But until then, this is Paula Felps reminding you to make every day a happy one.

[END]